

# Child and Family Services Update

August 2006

## Snippets from the Director

*By Richard Anderson*

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### **Careers Within a Career**

I often have conversations with my adult children about their futures and what they want to accomplish in their lives. We are a close family and have many of these types of discussions. What I read about careers for those starting out and, even, somewhere into their work years is that most can plan on having several different jobs in their work experience. Pondering this I have thought about all of you and what it means to have constant change and turnover in Child and Family Services. If people will be moving through five, six, or even more careers in a lifetime, what will happen to careers that take a long time to master? I have an answer born of my own experience.

Working in this division has provided so many opportunities to experience many specialties. I have stayed with this one agency for most of my career while at the same time experiencing many different jobs. Here is the list: child protective services, in-home services, foster care, adoptions, domestic violence, assistance payments, day care, disabilities, substance abuse, clinical social work, training, supervision, and administration. A few of these specialties are not in our division any more. Who knows, they could come back together some day. The point is this – you can find a change in your focus, a new career, by looking at other options in the division.

If you find that what you are doing is not as fulfilling as it once was, you want to continue to learn new skills, or you are curious about how other parts of the agency function, watch for opportunities to make a change. Let your local administrators know you are open and willing to try something new. This way you will increase your abilities and, at the same time, we can build an agency that has the experienced and knowledgeable people that children and families need to help them work through their struggles. So, you can have careers within this career, within this division. Bottom line – I want to keep all of you and at the same time have you experience growth as a professional.

Please send your ideas to  
[CAROLMILLER@utah.gov](mailto:CAROLMILLER@utah.gov)

## Nonresident Fathers

I know that we are working better than ever before to locate the fathers who are not, and were not, living with the children we serve. I recently read a study on this very issue. I am providing a summary of this research as provided by the Child Welfare League of America. The entire study can be located at the website listed at the end of the article.

### **“Nonresident Fathers and the Child Welfare System”**

Finding and engaging nonresident fathers carries the potential for significant benefits for children in the child welfare system. When fathers are identified and involved in decisions about their children, there is the possibility for a strengthened father-child relationship, increased permanency, and access to more family information and resources. A recent study, “What About the Dads? Child Welfare Agencies' Efforts to Identify, Locate and Involve Nonresident Fathers,” explored the ways that child welfare agencies in four States find and engage nonresident fathers. Findings from interviews with 1,222 caseworkers showed that:

- ◆ More than two-thirds of nonresident fathers were identified at the time their child's case was opened.
- ◆ Family and friends of the child were often unwilling or unable to provide information about unidentified nonresident fathers.
- ◆ Circumstances that made it difficult to locate nonresident fathers included incarceration, homelessness, and being out of the country.
- ◆ Half of the nonresident fathers who were contacted expressed interest in having their children live with them. Issues that sometimes prevented placement included substance abuse, involvement with the criminal justice system, and noncompliance with services.
- ◆ More than half of contacted fathers had visited their children in foster care.
- ◆ Caseworkers who received training on father involvement were more likely to locate fathers, use a variety of methods to find fathers, and make use of more father engagement activities than workers who had not received specialized training.

This exploratory study of nonresident fathers also examined practices and initiatives that may increase father involvement. Recommendations include:

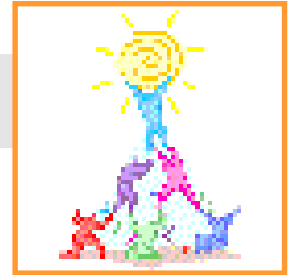
- ◆ Search for fathers early in the case.
- ◆ Provide caseworker training on finding and engaging fathers.
- ◆ Offer services designed to engage fathers.
- ◆ Address domestic violence concerns and worker safety issues.
- ◆ Use child support data, including data from State or Federal parent locator services.
- ◆ Develop models for involving fathers constructively.

What About the Dads? by K. Malm, J. Murray, and R. Geen, was prepared by the Urban Institute and released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE), and can be found at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/06/CW-involve-dads/report.pdf>.

## Development

### It's TAL Youth Summit Time Again!

*By Pamela Russell, Transition to Adult Living Program Manager*



**Believe In Yourself**

This year's Transition to Adult Living (TAL) Youth Summit theme says it all!

Youth from all over the state will meet on October 20 and 21, 2006 at beautiful Aspen Grove to learn leadership skills and demonstrate the power of believing in yourself.

This year's program is beyond great! A national group of former foster youth, who have been selected from across the country, will come and share their expertise and experiences around their journey transitioning from foster care to adulthood. These "FosterClub All Stars" speak from the heart and demonstrate leadership skills and represent diversity in their foster care experience, culture, geography, education, and skills. This will be a wonderful experience for our youth as they assemble and gain knowledge and skills to aid them in their transition to adulthood.

In addition to the "FosterClub All Stars", Brad Barton, an experienced motivational speaker and magician, uses magic that conveys a message to youth like no other. Brad captures his audience through his magic and is positively received wherever he presents.

This year's summit will be magical and motivational for our youth in more ways than can be imagined.

Youth may register to attend if they are age 16 or older and are:

- Currently in a foster care placement,
- Alumni of foster care,
- Youth placed in a kinship placement, or
- Youth in post-adoption.

Contact your regional Transition to Adult Living Coordinator for registration or email Pamela Russell at [pkruessel@utah.gov](mailto:pkruessel@utah.gov).

## Organizational Competence

### A Fond Farewell To Two Members Of The Board

*By Carol Miller, Program Support Specialist*

We recently had two parents complete their public service as acting members of the Board of Child and Family Services: Becky Oakley and Karen Sitterud. We would like to take this opportunity to share some information about these two wonderful women, and to thank them for their unwavering dedication to children and families in Utah.

### ***Becky Oakley***

Becky Oakley has been a foster parent and peer parent since 1992. She expanded the peer parenting program statewide in 1995, and continues to coordinate the statewide program today.



***Becky Oakley receives her  
Appreciation Award.***

Becky joined the Board in 1996. She enjoyed serving as liaison between the Board and the CAN Council, Out-of-Home Council, and Adoption Council. Becky also served as chairperson of the Board for the maximum amount of time that she could.

While on the Board, Becky worked with Senator Patrice Arent and others on the passage of the Safe Baby Relinquishment Bill. She also chaired a workgroup on family assessments, which turned into a pilot program. Becky's favorite thing the last few years was the staff recognition awards that the Board has been presenting to workers.

Becky thoroughly enjoyed working with the dedicated and outstanding Child and Family Services staff while serving on the Board and seeing the different program areas excel and be able to meet the needs of children and families. Becky joined the Board shortly after the David C. lawsuit agreement was reached, and she left the Board ten years later when Child and Family Services internalized the needed reforms and excelled beyond expectations in rendering quality and caring services to children and families in crisis.



## ***Karen Sitterud***

Karen Sitterud and her husband, Kirk, began their tenure as foster parents in 1975. Over the 30 years that they have worked with Child and Family Services, they have seen 130 children find permanence in their biological homes, kinship placements, and adoptions. There are many caseworkers who have truly become more than just workers to them – they are their friends. They have adopted 13 children, with 12 of them coming through Child and Family Services and one from India with help from one of our caseworkers who was the sponsoring worker for an adoption agency in Oregon. They also have one biological daughter.

Karen served on the Child and Family Services Board for four years, one of which was as chairperson. During this time, she was very active in kinship and adoption issues.

Karen also served as the area Utah Foster/Adoption Family Association president for three years and the statewide vice president for four years. She has been the Eastern Region peer parent coordinator for five years, and she has served on the Adoption Council for two years.

Although they have decided to take a break for a few years and raise their eight children still at home and a special granddaughter, the foster parent program is dear to the Sitterud's. They are always willing to help out and talk about this to other families who are interested in being part of a very special relationship with children and their biological families, as well as the many special social workers that serve them all.



***Karen Sitterud receives her  
Appreciation Award.***



## Sharing Practice Ideas

*By Cosette Mills, Federal Revenue Manager*

I recently attended the Eastern Region Administrative Team Meeting and picked up a couple of practice ideas being used there that may be of interest to others.

In the Blanding/Moab area, clinical consultants are being assigned as secondary workers on cases, so each case has a caseworker, supervisor, caseworker assistant, and clinical consultant assigned to it. The clinical consultants are assisting the caseworkers and entire child and family teams in identifying underlying needs, doing the child and family assessment in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being, and helping with identifying the long-term view. Caseworkers are focusing on telling the family's story. They have found this is helping them identify holes on the cases. Their goal is that all cases will have a strong assessment and long-term view by December 2006. The clinical consultant is also helping caseworkers communicate with therapists. This process was initially formalized by caseworkers working together under Shawn Jack and Travis Black's leadership in the Blanding Office. They are finding that this process is synergistic, has mentoring built right into it, and leaves caseworkers feeling supported by helping to pull the load together. We are hopeful that it will also produce results that will make a difference for children and families. If you would like more information on this process, you may contact Kevin Webb at [KGWEBB@utah.gov](mailto:KGWEBB@utah.gov).

Also, the team asked Charity Burnside what she does to have her workers' cases do so well in the QCRs and CPRs. She indicated that any time a worker gives her a service plan or service plan amendment to sign, she requires them to also provide copies of child and family team meeting minutes and the child and family assessment. She has then been able to work with the individual workers on looking at the total case more effectively.

We would love to hear of any other practice ideas that you are aware of to share with all staff. Please send your ideas to Carol Miller at [CAROLMILLER@utah.gov](mailto:CAROLMILLER@utah.gov).



## The Safety Model

*By Staci Ghneim, In-Home Services Program Manager*

### **Background**

Over the past decade there has been a shift in the national dialogue around child maltreatment. The shift has been away from decision-making processes that are focused on, and driven by, risk, incidents of maltreatment, and investigative findings. The shift has been toward assessment, decision-making, and intervention processes that are more directly linked to each other and are focused on, and driven by, child safety. At the heart of this shift is the delineation of *risk* from *safety*, and more clearly identifying child safety as the central concern and mission of child protective services and child welfare systems in general.



### **Federal Requirements**

In addition, the Federal Government has laid the legislative foundation for focusing on child safety. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) emphasizes that a child welfare system should be focused on child safety. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) also points child welfare systems in the direction of child safety, emphasizing that safety should be central to any decisions made throughout the life of a case, including placement, reunification, and case planning.

### **Safety in Utah**

Utah's Practice Model, with Protection as its paramount principle, has put us on the path to achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families, and the system consistently performs very well in reviews of child safety. However, further articulation, development, and integration of a formal model are needed. Again, at the heart of it is the need to eliminate confusion by clearly delineating *risk* from *safety*. For example, a variety of terms are often used interchangeably in day-to-day practice — such as “at risk” and “unsafe.” Distinctions in such terminology may seem inconsequential, but the implications of confusing these can be significant in the lives of children and families.

In addition, the need to resolve confusion extends to other related things that seem the same, but are not. For example, investigative findings are often mistaken as determinations about child safety. In actuality, there is a disparity or misalignment between findings and the reality of a child's safety. With current parameters, findings may not indicate, or even speak to, whether a child is safe or unsafe. Another example is the interpretation of parental compliance or noncompliance as the primary indicator of safety. While CPS may establish a focus on safety concerns in a family, often that focus is expanded or lost in the course of ongoing services. Crucial decisions end up being made based primarily on parental compliance, which may or may not point to, and without current assessment of, safety. A workgroup is working through some of these issues in developing Utah's Safety Model.

### **Model Development**

One of the first things the workgroup did was to analyze relevant information from federal and state legislation, national resource centers, other state systems that have already implemented a safety model, and our own current practice. With the Practice Model as the foundation, the workgroup has identified the key components and concepts of the Safety Model, which you may begin to hear about and catch glimpses of in the near future. So keep your eyes and ears open! The timeline is to have the model fully developed to begin formal implementation at some point in 2007.

### **Changes and Outcomes**

This Safety Model, in many ways, merely describes the great practice already being done by caseworkers and supervisors. In other ways, the model will bring dramatic, comprehensive change to our practice and our agency. And ultimately, it will result in greater protection and safety for the children and parents we serve in our community.



## Professional Competence

### Evidence-Based Practice

*By Carol Miller, Program Support Specialist*

I would like to share with you a website that is full of information about evidence-based practice. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC) website is designed to:

- Serve as an online connection for child welfare professionals, staff of public and private organizations, academic institutions, and others who are committed to serving children and families.
- Provide up-to-date information on evidence-based child welfare practices.
- Facilitate the utilization of evidence-based practices as a method of achieving improved outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families involved in the child welfare system.

Please visit <http://www.cachildwelfareclearinghouse.org/> for more information.



### Microsoft Word Editing Options

*By Navina Forsythe, Information Analyst Supervisor*

We all are used to printing out documents that we write and taking them to a supervisor or co-worker to review and make suggested changes with their red pens. But did you know that you can do this editing in Word? Word has the capability to track suggested changes that other people make to your documents, highlighting them in different colors, and allowing you the opportunity to accept or reject their changes without having to retype anything. Additionally, Word allows you to insert comments where you can put questions or statements for the author to consider. Instructions for using these tools are attached for your information.